

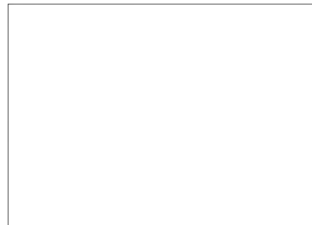
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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Friday 13 October 1978 CG NIDC 78/239



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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Friday, 13 October 1978.

The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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SYRIA-IRAQ: Reconciliation

Syrian President Assad has apparently taken the initiative toward ending Syria's longtime feud with Iraq. The relationship seems to be improving but each side almost certainly remains deeply suspicious of the other.

Assad wrote to Iraqi President Bakr last month, and a high Iraqi official is reported to have said last week that relations with Syria have improved since then. Syria has accepted Iraq's invitation to attend an Arab summit in Baghdad on 1 November.

Syria's Ambassador to Jordan told US officials this week that the Syrians had accepted the Iraqi invitation in part to press Saudi Arabia and the other Arab moderates into taking a firm stand against Egypt. He said another reason was to test Iraq's willingness to end the bitter feud with Syria.

He commented that the Syrians were interested in Iraq's offer to provide financial support to the confrontation states bordering Israel and that if the Iraqis were willing to follow through on the offer it would lead to a significant improvement in Iraqi-Syrian relations.

The Syrian Ambassador did not comment on Iraq's offer to send troops to the Golan Heights. Assad undoubtedly suspects that Iraqi troops in Syria would be a threat to his regime. In the past he has rebuffed similar Iraqi offers by demanding that Iraqi troops in Syria be placed under Syrian control.

Assad recognizes that Syria poses little military threat to Israel without Egyptian support, and he may hope to use Iraq, a major Arab military power, to bolster his credibility. He may calculate that a token Iraqi force in Syria backed up by a larger force in western Iraq would do this. Assad, moreover, is doubtless worried that the situation in Lebanon may deteriorate further and lead to a Syrian-Israeli clash. The Soviets and Arab hardliners probably also have encouraged Assad to mend relations with Iraq.

//The Jordanians told the US defense attache in Amman yesterday that two Iraqi brigades had recently moved to the Syrian border area. The Iraqis coordinated the move with

the Syrian Government and intended it to demonstrate support for Syria. The Jordanians believe that any decision actually to move Iraqi troops into Syria will be made at the Baghdad summit.//

Assad has long wanted to end the feud with Iraq but has always balked at Baghdad's demand that he repudiate Syria's commitment to a comprehensive peace agreement with Israel. We have no evidence to indicate that Assad has changed his stand.

For their part, the Iraqis may have decided for the moment to overlook their previous differences with Syria on the peace issue in order to work jointly against the Camp David accords.

Even if the Syrians and Iraqis can submerge their differences on the peace issue, there are many bilateral issues that could block any significant improvement in relations--including Baath Party rivalries, economic problems, and the deep distrust between the leaders on both sides.

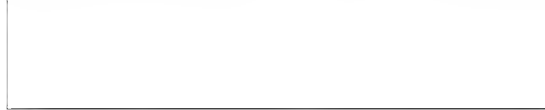
LEBANON: Sarkis Home At Last

Lebanese President Sarkis returned to Beirut yesterday from Damascus. Sarkis reportedly achieved some success in securing promises of additional non-Syrian Arab troops for the Arab Deterrent Force in Lebanon. Syrian President Assad apparently is continuing his efforts to get negotiations under way with the Maronite Christians.

In his remarks at the departure of Sarkis from Damascus, Assad hinted that there had been some progress in the talks. Assad said Syria holds no grudges against the Maronites and is willing to negotiate.

Assad received a prominent supporter of Maronite leader Camille Shamun on Wednesday, reportedly at Shamun's request. Earlier information indicated that Assad was trying to open a dialogue with Shamun.



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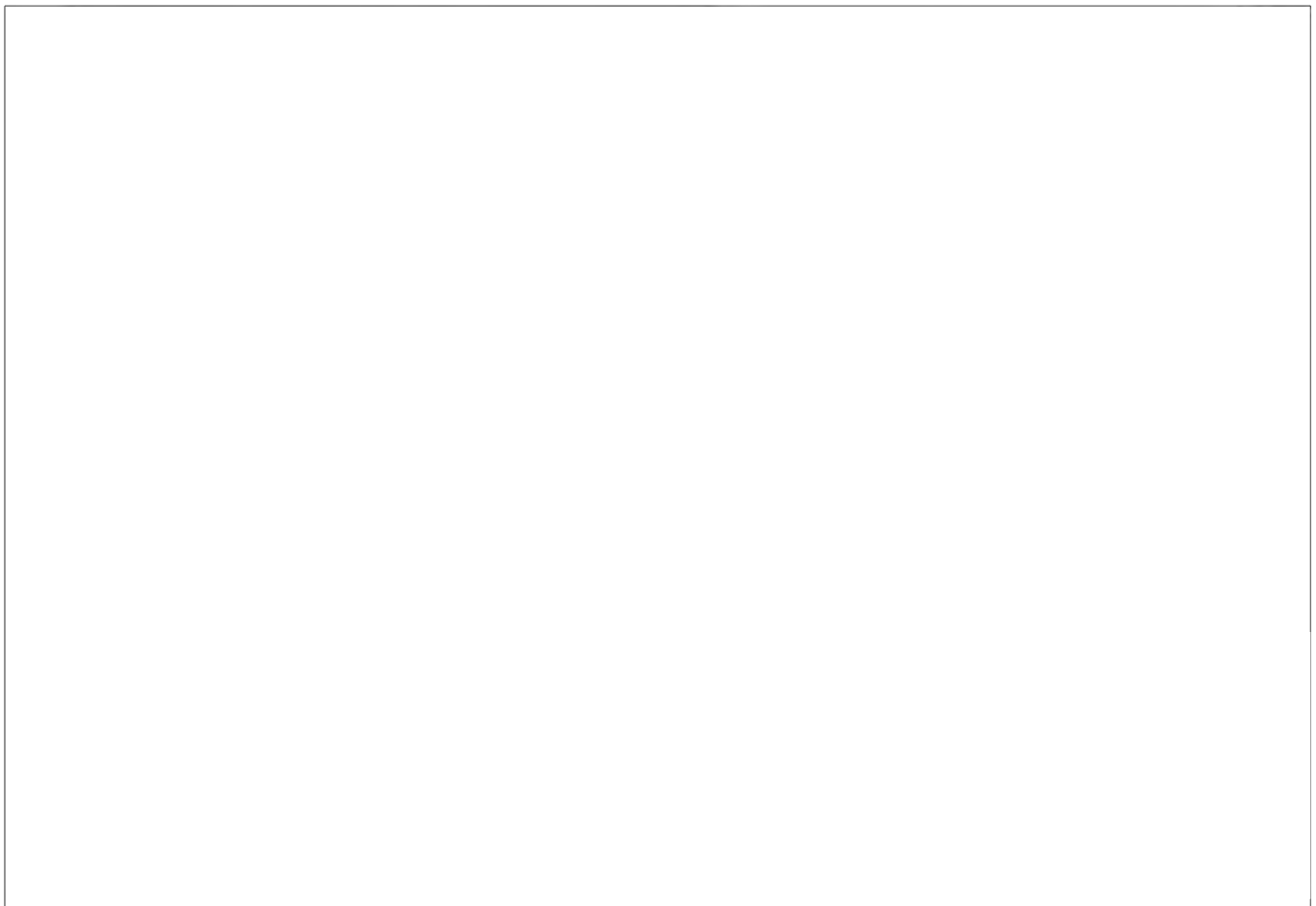
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 We have no indication as yet that the militia leadership is willing to accept the presence of non-Syrian ADF troops along the confrontation line in Beirut. Unless the militias are willing to accept a political compromise with the Syrians, it is unlikely that a limited number of additional Saudis or Jordanians would significantly alter the situation in Beirut. The militias could easily intimidate these forces and take advantage of their presence to gain control of any positions the Syrians turn over to the other Arabs. 
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COSTA RICA - NICARAGUA: Warning

[redacted] //Costa Rican President Carazo has warned publicly that his country will withdraw from the Organization of American States if the OAS does not support the Costa Rican resolution censuring a recent border incursion by Nicaragua. Any outcome of the vote, which could take place Monday, will complicate the US-sponsored effort to mediate Nicaragua's domestic conflict.//

[redacted] //During the last month, Carazo has become confused and embittered over being caught in the middle of the Nicaraguan Government's battle with the Sandinista guerrillas and their international supporters. The Costa Rican people and government strongly oppose the government of Nicaraguan President Somoza. Costa Rica does not provide the Sandinistas with any concrete support, but it is the guerrillas' principal sanctuary and staging area for operations into Nicaragua. The Carazo government is disinclined--and the small Civil Guard is militarily unable--to prevent such use of its territory.//

[redacted] //The continuing Nicaraguan incursions--five in the past month--in search of guerrillas and the failure of the OAS to take any action to stop the border crossings have increasingly incensed Carazo. His threat to leave the OAS and take the matter to the UN has been the topic of intense public discussion in Costa Rica and will make any retreat exceedingly awkward.//

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[] //The Costa Ricans have worded their resolution to "censure and deplore" a single event--the bombing and strafing of Costa Ricans by a Nicaraguan aircraft on 12 September. The resolution would not censure the Somoza government directly. Nevertheless, the international mediation effort just getting under way in Nicaragua would be hindered if the matter comes to a vote.//

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[] //Approval would probably make Somoza more defensive and obstinate, while encouraging his domestic opponents to be more demanding. Failure of the resolution, on the other hand, would strengthen Somoza's position and alienate the opposition.

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BRAZIL: Presidential Elections

//Brazilian President Geisel's hand-picked successor, Joao Baptista Figueiredo, is virtually certain to be elected Brazil's next president on Sunday; the electoral college is dominated by representatives of the progovernment party. The 60-year-old retired Army general will take office in March for a six-year term.//

//Figueiredo appears to lack President Geisel's sophistication and self-confidence. Unlike Geisel, Figueiredo does not seem likely to take charge of almost all policy matters and probably will rely on a wide circle of advisers and aides, delegating substantial authority.//

//As President, Figueiredo will face a civilian sector that is pressing for increased political liberalization and a military that believes it should decrease its governing role. Figueiredo's temperament could make matters worse. His presidency seems likely to be difficult.//

//Although the vote in the 590-member electoral college will be essentially pro forma, the campaign period has been the most open in Brazil's 14 years of military government. For the first time, the country's only legal opposition party fielded a candidate, and he has challenged Figueiredo and the government precisely on the issue of political liberalization.//

//This question, together with the nuances of the balloting in the electoral college, will have a strong impact on the voting for one-third of the Senate and all of the lower house on 15 November. The outcome in this open balloting is by no means certain; the opposition scored important victories in Brazil's largest and most politically influential cities in the past two congressional elections.//

//According to the most recent sampling of public opinion, the progovernment party leads the opposition by a narrow margin, with a large percentage of voters still undecided.

There is growing concern within the government that the opposition may win control of the lower house of congress. Such a development would test the commitment of President Geisel and his successor to continue the process of democratic reform.

PAKISTAN: Opposition to Zia

//Dissatisfaction with President Zia-ul-Haq continues to grow in Pakistan, but so far there appears to be no plan to replace him.//

//Last month, former Prime Minister Bhutto's followers stepped up agitation in an effort to save him from execution. Sometime this fall the Supreme Court is likely to rule on Bhutto's appeal of his conviction for a political murder. If the court, as expected, upholds the death sentence, Zia would then make the final decision on Bhutto's fate.//

//Leaders of Bhutto's party expect a strong public reaction to a decision to execute the former Prime Minister, even though the widespread detention of Bhutto supporters has halted their antigovernment campaign. Party leaders apparently have no hope that Bhutto can be saved but believe that popular agitation might be strong enough to bring down Zia.//

//Ultimately, Zia's ability to stay in office depends on the continued support of the military. Zia's inability to solve Pakistan's economic and political problems, his assumption of the Presidency, his efforts to downgrade potential rivals in the Army, and the belief that martial law is damaging both the reputation and the military capability of the Army have all contributed to growing unhappiness among senior officers.//

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[] //So far, however, military officers do not appear to be planning to move against the President. They may well prefer to leave him in office at least until he decides Bhutto's fate. Any decision by Zia is bound to be unpopular with some sector of Pakistani society. []

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BRIEFS

USSR-China

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[] The 21st session of the Sino-Soviet river navigation talks will open in early November in the USSR, []

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[] The 20th session last year followed three years of postponements because of differences over the agenda. The two sides have apparently agreed upon an agenda for this year despite the poor state of relations and continuing boundary disputes along the Amur and Ussuri rivers.

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[] KGB Lieutenant General Lobanov, deputy chief negotiator at the Peking border talks, has departed China on extended leave. The border talks have been stalemated since they began in 1969, and Lobanov's departure probably reflects Moscow's assessment that no early progress can be expected.

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[] The Soviets have nevertheless tried to reduce the polemical exchanges between the two sides. Soviet media criticism has been lessened for nearly a month, perhaps reflecting a Soviet reluctance to expose Sino-Soviet problems unnecessarily during a period of intensive negotiations with the US. []

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Sweden

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[] The new Swedish minority government, headed by recently elected Liberal Party chief Ola Ullsten, was announced late yesterday. The party, which received only 11 percent of the vote in the last election, is in many ways closer to the Social Democrats than to the nonsocialist parties it worked with in the three-party coalition that collapsed last week.

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 The Liberals have not yet indicated whether they will lean more to the right or to the left for support, but their choice will be influenced by their perceptions of voter trends. Parliamentary elections are still scheduled for next September.

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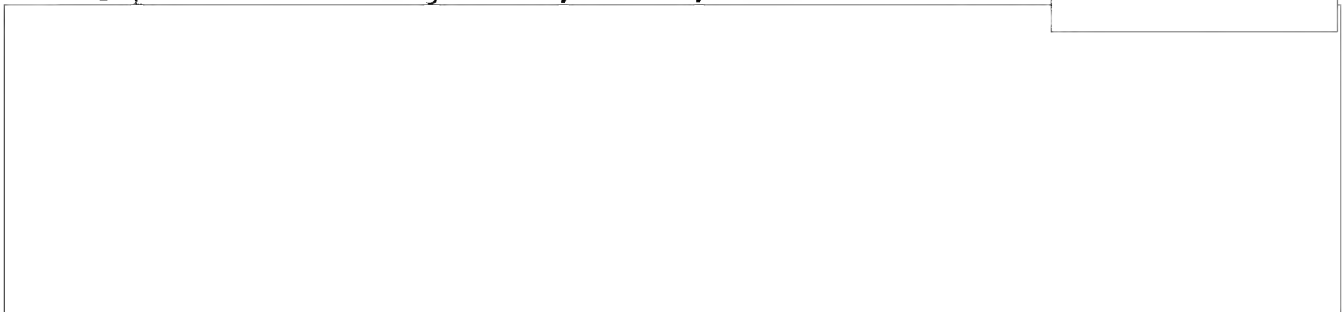
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 The Soviets have announced plans to flight-test missiles to an impact area in the Pacific Ocean, some 650 kilometers north of Midway Island, between today and 31 October. They have used the general area of the announced closure zone in the past for testing SS-17, SS-18, and SS-19 ICBMs.

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